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Kerry's anti-Contra efforts extensive, expensive, in vain

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y James Morrison
E WASHINGTON TIMES

Sen. John Kerry's attempts to ove criminal activity by the Nicaguan resistance have stretched from California to Costa Rica, cost thousands of dollars paid by one of his aides, and have drawn allegations that he offered potential witnesses money or immigration favor to testify against the anti-communis rebels.

A Justice Department investiga tion discovered nothing of signifi cance, but gave Mr. Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, a platform to denounce the resistance and ask hostile questions about U.S. policy in Central America.

Charges of bribery against the senator were retracted Monday by British adventurer Peter Glibbery, who made them in a sworn affidavit last week.

But letters Mr. Glibbery wrote while imprisoned in Costa Rica and interviews he gave British Embassy officials indicated that he expected Sen. Kerry to pay his bail and help him get work papers in the United States.

Neither Mr. Kerry nor his staff would discuss his activities with The Washington Times, despite repeated telephone calls over two days.

In other newspaper interviews, Mr. Kerry claimed to have gathered substantial evidence from various informants, including Mr. Glibbery, who had written earlier letters that contradicted what they told Kerry staffers.

Cross-country flights were made to interview Nicaraguan refugees. At least $10,000, much of it apparently paid by a Kerry aide, was spent to cover hotel bills, air fares and gas mileage for informants who eventually denounced the senator's efforts as part of a disinformation campaign.

Sources said Mr. Kerry's staff worked closely with a Washington-based organization headed by Robert White, who is a former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador and an outspoken critic of President Reagan's Central American policies.

The efforts also included fierce ebates between Mr. Kerry's staff d that of Indiana Republican Richd Lugar, chairman of the Senate oreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Kerry tried unsuccessfully to persuade Mr. Lugar to hold open committee hearings on charges that the resistance fighters and their American supporters smuggled guns and cocaine, plotted assassinations of U.S. officials and murdered a mysterious informant who allegedly first revealed the illegal activities to journalists in Costa Rica.

Mr. Lugar refused, but invited Justice Department representatives to the staff meetings to hear the charges from Kerry aides.

"We have looked into each and every one of the allegations, in some cases with extensive investigations, and none has produced any substantial evidence on the part of any of the mainstream Contra groups or any of their leaders," said Justice spokesman Patrick Korten, referring to the rebels, who are often called "Contras," or counter-revolutionaries.

Said one congressional source: "Mr. Kerry's staff had run amok."

"The word on Capitol Hill is that the Kerry staff is the Helms staff of the left," said the source, apparently referring to recent charges, not yet resolved, that an aide to conservative North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms passed U.S. intelligence to Chile.

Richard McCall, a legislative aide to Sen. Kerry, paid $1,193.83 to cover expenses for one informant, Philip Mabry, who stayed at the Crystal City Marriott hotel in March, according to a credit card receipt in Mr. McCall's name that Mr. Mabry supplied to The Washington Times.

One hotel bill for that visit was reserved in Mr. McCall's name, and the address on another bill was listed as Sen. Kerry's office in the Russell Senate Office Building, according to copies of the bills that were also supplied by Mr. Mabry.

Mr. Mabry said Mr. McCall and two representatives of Mr. White's organization, the International Center for Policy Development, sent him $6,800 in money orders from March 6 through April 30 to cover travel expenses to Washington and to San Francisco.

Mr. Mabry, who said he had evidence of rebel misuse of U.S. funds, cooperated with the Kerry investigation until he denounced it as a "witch hunt."

Mr. McCall, in an earlier interview, said Sen. Kerry's office had not paid Mr. Mabry's expenses. It is not clear whether Mr. McCall was reimbursed for his expenses. A Senate official said rules governing reimbursement from Senate office accounts do not cover such costs.

A report prepared by Sen. Lugar's staff noted that Mr. Glibbery, who was arrested in Costa Rica in 1985 while helping to take supplies to the resistance fighters, "said an aide to Sen. Kerry had assured Glibbery that the senator would pay bond." The staffer was identified as administrative aide Ronald Rosenblith.

The report was quoting from a May cable to the State Department from the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica.

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